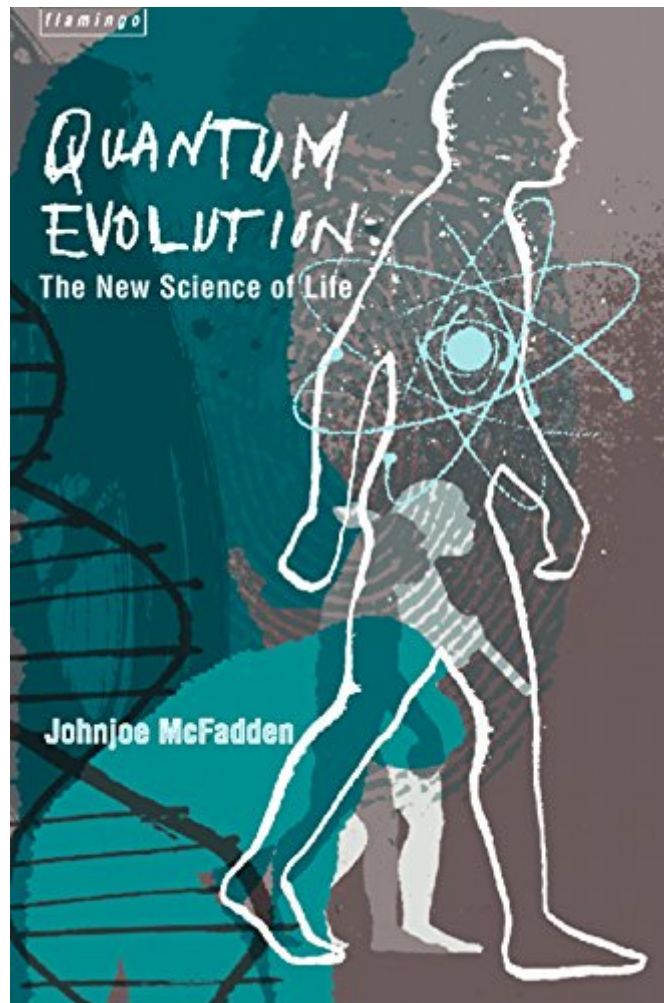


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Quantum Evolution: Life In The Multiverse



Synopsis

Quantum Evolution presents a revolutionary new scientific theory by asking: is there a force of will behind evolution? In his astonishing first book, Johnjoe McFadden shows that there is. McFadden's bold hypothesis that quantum physics plays a key role in the origin and evolution of life looks increasingly plausible. The weird behaviour of matter and information at the quantum level could be just what is needed to explain life's astonishing properties. If these ideas are right, they will transform our understanding of the relationship between physics and biology.

PAUL DAVIES In this brilliant debut, Johnjoe McFadden puts forward a theory of quantum evolution. He shows how living organisms have the ability to will themselves into action. Indeed, such an ability may be life's most fundamental attribute. This has radical implications. Evolution may not be random at all, as recent evolutionary theories have taught: rather, cells may, in certain circumstances, be able to choose to mutate particular genes that provide an advantage in the environment in which the cell finds itself. This "will" described by McFadden as "the life force" has startling implications. It is at the root of consciousness and free-will and provides a new understanding of the origins of life and the purpose of death.

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Customer Reviews

You've probably noticed that there is a growing flood of books that purport to explore the interface between the spooky scientific world of quantum physics and a range of other aspects of existence? You've probably also come to realize that these vary widely in emphasis (consciousness, healing, the paranormal... now evolution), and you've probably worried that they vary in quality as well - you're right. John Joe McFadden's "Quantum Evolution" is, thus far, the best of the lot that I have discovered. It is engaging, extremely readable, consistently scientific and broadly important in its explorations. If you are mostly interested in the healing or paranormal or so-called "new age" linkages to quantum phenomena, look elsewhere. The strength of this book is that it maintains a stance on the scientific side of the matter even as the science steps into the looking glass of quantum reality. Many in the sciences don't seem to know what to do with the quantum world. The physicists seem to wobble in their ability to create rich models at any level above that of the quantum phenomena themselves - perhaps because theirs can be a sparse world... the vast emptiness beyond the quark. They are often only comfortable "wrapping" the ultimately incomprehensible realities of the quantum world in merely mathematical or semantic models. McFadden, on the other hand, comes to this effort as a life scientist. As a molecular biologist he has moved from internationally recognized work on Tuberculosis to explorations at the bacterial level to studies of the molecular activities of the cell. Now, he has moved to the realization that the strange, spooky realm of quantum particle-waves, of wave-function collapse and multiple-world models is a logical next step.

John Joe McFadden, professor of molecular genetics at the University of Surrey, England identifies four major problems with Darwinian evolutionary theory. The first, and most well-known, is the gaps in the fossil record. These are often explained as simply an incomplete fossil record, however, as McFadden states: "... recent exhaustive studies of well-preserved species, such as marine snails, tend to support the view that, generally, evolution seems to hop and jump, rather than crawl."

McFadden points out that some paleontologists such as Stephen Gould and Niles Eldridge have come up with a more compatible hypothesis called "punctuated equilibrium" which coincides more closely with the fossil record, however, many prominent evolutionary biologists including Richard Dawkins sees little in the way of a mechanism to account for these large jumps in the evolutionary tree. The second problem is the lack of precursors for the approximately one thousand protein

families. McFadden states: "New protein families must have arisen from existing proteins by some kind of mutational process but how their sequence traversed this vast empty sequence space devoid of Darwinian intermediates is a mystery." The third problem is the irreducibility of metabolic pathways. McFadden gives the example of AMP (adenosine monophosphate) which is a precursor of ATP. Thirteen different enzymes are needed to synthesize AMP, yet there exist no evidence of advantageous precursors of this biochemical in other organisms. How these sequences happened within the present Darwinian theory of gradualism is difficult to explain. Finally, there is the problem of directionality of random mutations. Mutations happen blindly with no regard as to whether the mutation will be harmful or beneficial.

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